

Message Text

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PAGE 01 YAOUND 05520 161034Z

ACTION AF-10

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FM AMEMBASSY YAOUNDE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4001

C O N F I D E N T I A L YAOUNDE 5520

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: EAID, PFOR, CM, US

SUBJ: MEETING WITH MINISTER ECONOMY AND PLAN

1. ON DEC 13 AF/C DIRECTOR JUNIOR, SEVERAL MEMBERS OF MY STAFF AND I MET WITH MINISTER ECONOMY AND PLAN YOUSOUFA DAOUDA, CAMEROON AMBASSADOR TO US BENOIT BINDZI, AND DIRECTOR OF PROGRAMMING NJOYA FOR A BRIEFING ON CAMEROON'S ECONOMY AND DEVELOPMENT PRIORITIES. DAOUDA SEIZED OCCASION TO MAKE PLEA FOR MORE US ASSISTANCE, PARTICULARLY FOR LONG-TERM INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS. DAOUDA CLAIMED THAT OUR ASSISTANCE HAD BEEN MEAGER IN RELATION TO SIZE AND STRENGTH OF U.S.; HE SAID THAT TOTAL US AID AMOUNTED TO ABOUT \$65 MILLION OR ONLY 7 PERCENT OF ALL ASSISTANCE GRANTED TO CAMEROON SINCE INDEPENDENCE. DAOUDA AND AMBASSADOR BINDZI ALSO CRITICIZED US PREFERENCE NOT TO FINANCE LONG-TERM INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS. THEY ARGUED THAT INFRASTRUCTURE

PROJECTS HAVE VERY GREAT IMPACT ON ALL LEVELS OF POPULATION. INCLUDING THE POOREST, BECAUSE THEY PROVIDE ESSENTIAL BASIC SERVICES FACILITATE MARKETING OF FARM PRODUCTS, AND MAKE IT EASIER TO ATTRACT FOREIGN INVESTMENT.

2. DAOUDA ALSO GAVE PRESENTATION OF CAMEROON DEVELOPMENT PRIORITIES. BEGINNING WITH STATEMENT THAT BASE OF CAMEROON'S ECONOMY IS AGRICULTURE, DAOUDA INDICATED THAT THREE TOP
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PAGE 02 YAOUND 05520 161034Z

PRIORITIES WERE RURAL/AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT, ENERGY (I.E. THE DEVELOPMENT OF HYDRO-ELECTRIC POWER AND RURAL ELECTRIFICATION), AND TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE. GREATER U.S. ASSISTANCE WOULD BE MOST WELCOME IN ALL THESE AREAS. IN PARTICULAR, DAOUDA SUGGESTED U.S. MIGHT FINANCE INTEGRATED PROJECTS IN RURAL AREAS IN WHICH INFRASTRUCTURE WOULD BE ONLY ONE ELEMENT.

3. IN RESPONSE TO OUR EXPLANATION OF CONGRESSIONAL CONSTRAINTS IMPOSED ON AID, AMBASSADOR BINDZI ASSERTED THAT IT WAS NOT A QUESTION OF CONGRESSIONALLY DETERMINED PRIORITIES BUT ONE OF POLITICAL WILL. HE SAID THAT IF THE U.S. CONSIDERED A COUNTRY TO BE POLITICALLY IMPORTANT, WAYS COULD BE FOUND TO FUNNEL MASSIVE AMOUNTS OF AID FOR INFRASTRUCTURE AND OTHER LONG TERM PROJECTS. DAOUDA PICKED UP ON THIS THEME AND APPEALED FOR INCREASED U.S. ASSISTANCE BY PORTRAYING CAMEROON AS A BASTION OF STABILITY AND PRO-WESTERN SENTIMENT IN AN INCREASINGLY UNSTABLE AND RADICAL AFRICA.

4. MORE THAN ONCE THE MINISTER SPECIFIED BILATERAL AID AS APPROPRIATE MECHANISM.

5. COMMENT: MEETING WAS USEFUL IN THAT IT CLEARED THE AIR, REVEALED GURC PERCEPTIONS OF U.S. ASSISTANCE PROGRAM, AND IN PART, REPRESENTED HIGH LEVEL RESPONSE TO OUR REQUEST THAT BOTH SIDES WORK TOGETHER TO IDENTIFY AREAS OF MUTUAL PRIORITY WHERE U.S. AID COULD BE CONCENTRATED. IT IS WORTH NOTING THAT DAOUDA AND BINDZI VIEW AID INCLUDING U.S. ASSISTANCE AS BAROMETER OF RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN GURC AND DONOR GOVERNMENT. WE INTEND TO FOLLOW UP WITH MEETINGS AT THE WORKING LEVEL.
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